

**Inaugural Address by Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand Dr. K.K. Paul
at the XIXth Commonwealth Forestry Conference (CGC) at FRI,
Dehradun, on April 3, 2017**

Mr. A.N. Jha, Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change; Dr. John Innes, Chair of the Standing Committee on Commonwealth Forestry, Shri S.S.Negi, Former Director General of Forests and Special Secretary, Government of India; Dr. Michael Kleine, Deputy Executive Director, International Union of Forestry Research Organizations, Austria; Dr. Peter Holmgren, Director General, Center for International Forestry Research, Indonesia; Dr. S.C. Gairola, Director General, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, Dehradun; Dr. Savita, Director, Forest Research Institute; professional foresters and eminent scientists; learned delegates, distinguished guests; media personnel, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is indeed an honour for me to be present here on this historic occasion, amidst a galaxy of specialists and professionals from the fields of forestry research, management and conservation. It is a matter of great honour for India, and in particular to the Himalayan State of Uttarakhand, and Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, that the 'Commonwealth Forestry Association' has chosen the FRI, Dehradun as the venue for the Nineteenth Commonwealth Forestry Conference.

Even as the entire world and the humanity are facing enormous environmental challenges, there are high expectations from this Conference.

Ladies & Gentlemen !

On behalf of the people of India, the State of Uttarakhand, organizers of the Conference, and on my own behalf, I extend a very warm welcome to all of you. The Historic Forest Research Institute (FRI), the host institution was established in 1906. Besides it has further completed twenty five years of being a deemed university. Recognized by the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) this world famous institute is associated with the evolution and development of scientific forestry not only in the country but in the entire Indian sub-continent.

It is interesting to note that the history of forestry in India has its beginnings in this region, and even now, all forest officers receive their training in the Doon valley, which can be called the “cradle of Indian Forestry”. At the same time, this Himalayan region is home of the Chipko movement of conservation that is regarded as an ideal in the environment conservation movements of the world. The pride that this gives to this hill region is immense. And yet, we are faced with several aspects related to our forests and environment which need to be dealt with so that the state can benefit from its rich biodiversity. The fragile ecology has always kept the region under a threat of natural disasters.

Our changing way of life is placing pressure on this region and its forests . Uttarakhand, with its rich biodiversity and fragile ecology, is a state where it becomes extremely important to ensure that the ecological balance and the forest wealth are protected in order to check the problems posed by forests and wildlife. Issues like man-animal conflict, illegal felling of trees, forest fires, land and mountain slides over dependence of people on forest resources and the challenge of balancing environment conservation with economic and industrial development as also tourism, need to be looked into deeply in order to resolve the problems.

For this august gathering, there is hardly any need to over-emphasize that the health of the world's forests is essential for billions of people of the world, including many of the world's poorest people, who solely depend on forests for their food, fuel, medicine, shelter, and incomes.

It is possible that forest exploitation and unsustainable forest harvests in short term may provide financial and economic incentives to some individuals, some select interest groups and forest-based industries. However, if they continue to focus on short term gains, they will never be able to achieve sustainable development goals as it would favour forest destruction. The consequences of such destruction will be even more disastrous for future generations. Recent researches have amply shown that the cash and non-cash incomes of the rural poor, depend to a very high degree on what the forestry and environmental professionals now call the 'ecosystem services' provided by varied forests. Protecting forests,

therefore, not only makes sense for reducing disaster risk and greenhouse emissions; it also makes pro-poor sense.

Yet despite numerous benefits of stopping deforestation, more than thirteen million hectares of forests are cleared around the world each year. This deforestation accounts for around twenty per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and it is threatening the future of our planet. Part of the problem arises from the fact that we do not have a system of 'green accounting'. Economists estimate GDP, which is gross domestic product, as a broad measure of national income and also estimate NDP or net domestic product, which accounts for the use of physical capital. But as yet, we have no generally accepted system to convert Gross Domestic Product into Green Domestic Product that would reflect the use of precious natural resources in the process of generating national income. It is hoped, a better clarity on the concept of Green Domestic Product would sensitise the stake holders more appropriately.

The selected theme of XIX CFC - 'Forests for Prosperity and Posterity' is of utmost relevance, as to a great extent, the future of people and the planet is in the hands of professionals like you. It is hoped that this Conference would focus on devising appropriate mechanisms and strategies to accomplish the tall order of forest conservation and more specifically, sustainable development goals, for the overall well-being and prosperity of our world and posterity.

Today, keeping the world's remaining forests standing, and in good health, is of immense value and of utmost significance for the current and future generations to protect and conserve them, rather than cutting them down or allowing their degradation. Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) and the Sustainable Development Goals are vital at the global, national, and local levels. REDD+ has been widely recognized as a unique opportunity for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands, and to invest in low-carbon pathways to sustainable development. REDD+ is a transformational initiative which aims to advance every strand of sustainable development for current and future generations and for the planet.

We are all aware that sequestering atmospheric CO₂ is a major problem and is at the core of global warming. Forests are the best and most natural resource acting as Carbon sinks, due to photosynthesis. As of now, efforts have been successful through Green houses to maintain a controlled environment for accelerating photosynthesis.

I think, more research is required to be carried out so that the phenomenon of photosynthesis could be catalysed and accelerated under open sky. This would be of immense benefit to the humanity as more Carbon would be sequestered, more oxygen would be produced and crop or vegetation cycles could be accelerated.

In recent years, the world community and various forestry forums have made it clear that no single agency alone, can solve the problem

of deforestation all by itself. Instead, various stakeholders need to work together: governments, the private sector, local authorities, NGOs, and indigenous peoples. Governments need to play their respective roles in legislating, regulating, and upholding laws and other directives. The private sector needs to clean up its supply chains. Citizens need to opt for ethical consumption. NGOs should advocate and help in creating mass awareness.

The Sustainable Development Goal 15 of the UN proposes to ‘protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss’. Under this goal, targets for halting deforestation and ensuring the conservation and restoration of forests have been suggested.

I am sure that the learned delegates and forestry professionals who have come from far flung commonwealth nations will actively deliberate, and share their knowledge and wisdom so as to make this Conference successful. I am confident that with your efforts and contributions, the XIX CFC will bring out specific recommendations for short term and long term priority actions required for policy and legislative interventions, new initiatives needed towards forestry research, management and conservation by various international organizations, and the national and local governments.

Before I conclude, I wish all participants a comfortable and memorable stay at Dehradun and all success for this important Conference.

At the end, I commend the efforts of the organizers and particularly Dr. Savita, Director, FRI for organizing this historic event at FRI, Dehradun.

Thank you

Jai Hind !